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ABSTRACT

Responses were received from all 50 state education agencies and the District of Columbia to a questionnaire seeking information on: (1) state agency which issues teaching certificates; (2) fee structure for various services a certification unit might perform; (3) increases in fees over the past four or five years; and (4) significant issues affecting the types of service offered and fees charged. The information received indicated that certification fees are common and are rising. Most of the states offering certificates at no cost are in the eastern half of the nation, and are rather evenly divided between the northeastern quadrant and the southeastern quadrant. The three states that have begun charging fees in the last four or five years are located in the northeast. Fees range from 1 to 50 dollars. From the 39 states that provided information about the size of their fees, the median fee was in the neighborhood of 15 dollars, which is lower than fees generally charged for other state licensing services. The response of each state to the questionnaire is listed and the questionnaire is appended. (JD)

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Teacher Certification Fees, A Survey

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On November 12, 1982, a brief questionnaire was mailed to each state education agency requesting information about teacher certification fees required by the issuing agency. The questionnaire was designed to do the following:

1. establish the name and address of the state agency responsible for teacher certification.

2. identify an individual who can be contacted for additional information.

3. determine the trend in fees charged by the various states.

4. identify issues that seemed important to the respondent as he/she completed the questionnaire.

5. encourage a response from every state by limiting the number of questions and asking questions that an informed staff member could answer in ten minutes or less.

A follow-up request was sent on December 10, 1982, to fifteen states from which responses had not been received. By January 11, 1983, all questionnaires had been returned. The results are summarized and some information on individual states is presented in the material that follows. (A copy of the questionnaire is attached to this report.)

Question one asked what agency issued teaching certificates. Only California and Oregon have separate agencies for this purpose. The state education agency does it in the other 48 states and the District of Columbia.

Question two asked about the fee structure for various services that a certification unit might perform. (It appeared from the responses that few people were troubled by the terminology used. "Services" were not defined in the questionnaire; therefore, services may have been interpreted somewhat differently in various states.)

"Do you charge fees for any of the following?"
a. Initial applications

Yes 37 (73%) No 14 (27%)

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b. Renewals

Yes 32 (63%) No 19 (37%)

(Three of the 32 that are reported here as "yes" were actually left blank on the form. In one case, teacher certificates are issued for life but the state charges for initial applications. In the other two cases, the states charge for initial applications and the issuance of additional certificates.)

c. Issuance of additional certificates

Yes 35 (69%) No 16 (31%)

d. Consultation (either via phone or visit)

Yes 0 (0%) No 51 (100%)

e. Review of credentials

Yes 11 (22%) No 40 (88%)

(Two of the 40 that are reported here as "no" were left blank on the form. In both cases, the states charge fees to persons requesting certificates but do not provide any review of credentials outside the regular application process.)

Question three asked about increases in fees over the last four or five years. The question was not intended to measure the degree of increase, but to identify major trends. The time frame was deliberately made vague ("over the last four or five years") so that all significant changes occurring within a fairly recent period would be considered. As the forms came in, the responses were reviewed and multiple answers to the questions were examined so that the "one best" could be identified. Multiple answers involved statement C ("We continue to charge for some or all services"), with another that contained the concept of current charges. Listed below are the six statements, along with the number of respondents for whom that statement best describes their situation.

"The certification unit does not and has not charged applicants for services." (The District of Columbia and ten states.

"While no charges are now being made, in the past some or all services were charged for." (Two states.)

"We continue to charge for some or all services." (Eighteen states.)

"We began charging for some or all services during the last four years and continue to do so." (Three states.)

"Over the past four or five years, our rates have increased the cost to our clients." (Sixteen states.)

"Over the past four or five years, our rates have been lowered, even though we continue to charge for some or all of our services." (One state.)

Question four was a deliberately ambiguous request for the respondent to identify two or three significant issues that affect the types of services offered and fees charged. The question was designed to surface concerns of staff in certification units across the nation. Twelve (24%) did not respond to the question. (Only one of those chastised the writer for lack of clarity.) The 39 (76%) who did respond commented on the following issues and practices with respect to teacher certification.

A. Certification procedures and requirements have become much more complex over the last 20 years.

B. The elimination of life certificates has resulted in increased work loads for agency staff.

C. Some agencies which have not had fees in the past are seriously considering the introduction of fees, or have made definite plans to begin charging fees.

D. Some legislatures pushed the agencies into charging fees.

E. In one state, the teacher association lobbied against a fee unless the legislature turned over the certification process to the association.

F. While some agencies are obliged to charge fees, they keep them as low as possible because agency staff see teacher certification as a service provided to the public.

G. One state began charging fees to finance the cost of computerized services and to reduce the number of applicants. Both objectives were achieved.

H. As the certification process has become more complex, fees have been raised.

I. Significant budget cuts have prompted some states to begin charging fees.

J. Some states only charge fees to nonresident applicants.

K. One state does not charge a renewal fee to applicants who are currently employed by the public schools of the state.

L. Some states' fee receipts go directly into the state general fund.

M. One state splits the fee receipts between the certification unit and the professional practices commission.

N. Securing funds to employ enough staff to get the job done in a timely manner is a frequent concern.

O. One state automatically renews certificates for certain personnel who are currently employed in the public schools of that state.

P. Some states are concerned about the length of time required to process an application.

Q. Some states see word processing systems and improved computer systems as means of reducing turnaround time. Other states believe these approaches increase costs.

R. Some states lament having to process applications for "certificate collectors".

S. One state reports that providing free information about certification to large numbers of requesters is a significant problem.

The table that begins on the next page provides a state-by-state report of the responses to questions 1, 2, 3, and 5.

In summary, the information obtained through this survey indicates that certification fees are common, and are rising. Most of the states offering certificates at no cost are in the eastern half of the nation, and are rather evenly divided between the northeastern quadrant and the southeastern quadrant. The three states that have begun charging fees in the last four or five years are located in the northeast. Fees range from $1.00 to $50. Of the 39 states that provided some information about the size of their fees, the median fee for states that charge fees was in the neighborhood of $15. This is smaller than fees generally charged for other state licensing services.

INDIVIDUAL STATE RESPONSES TO QUESTIONS 1, 2, 3, and 5

"Y" and "N" are used to indicate the "yes" and "no" responses to questions 1 and 2. "A" through "F" are used in question 3 to indicate the one best statement to characterize the state. The name given in question 5 was the individual who could provide additional information about the state's response.

STATE	(1)	(2)					(3)	(5)
		(a)	(b)	(c)	(d)	(e)		
ALABAMA	Y	Y	Y	Y	N	N	C	
ALASKA	Y	Y	Y	Y	N	N	C	
ARIZONA	Y	Y	Y	Y	N	Y	E	
ARKANSAS	Y	N	N	N	N	N	A	
CALIFORNIA	N	Y	Y	Y	N	N	E	
COLORADO	Y	Y	Y	Y	N	Y	C	
CONNECTICUT	Y	Y	Y	Y	N	N	C	
DELAWARE	Y	Y	N	Y	N	N	D	
DIST. OF COLUMBIA	Y	N	N	N	N	N	A	
FLORIDA	Y	Y	Y	Y	N	Y	C	
GEORGIA	Y	N	N	N	N	N	A	
HAWAII	Y	N	N	N	N	N	A	
IDAHO	Y	Y	Y	Y*	N	Y*	E	
ILLINOIS	Y	Y	N	Y	N	Y	E	
INDIANA	Y	Y	Y	Y	N	Y	C	
IOWA	Y	Y	Y	N	N	N	C	
KANSAS	Y	Y	Y	Y	N	N	E	
KENTUCKY	Y	N	N	N	N	N	A	
LOUISIANA	Y	N	N	N	N	N	A	
MAINE	Y	N	N	N	N	N	A	
MARYLAND	Y	Y	Y	Y	N	N	D	
MASSACHUSETTS	Y	Y	Y	Y	N	N*	C	
MICHIGAN	Y	N	N	N	N	N	B	
MINNESOTA	Y	Y	Y	Y	N	N	C	
MISSISSIPPI	Y	N	N	Y	N	N	E	
MISSOURI	Y	N	N	N	N	N	A	
MONTANA	Y	Y	Y	N	N	N	C*	
NEBRASKA	Y	Y	Y	Y	N	N	E	
NEVADA	Y	Y	Y	Y	N	Y	E	
NEW HAMPSHIRE	Y	Y	Y	Y	N	Y	C	

* Response modified

INDIVIDUAL STATE RESPONSES
TO QUESTIONS 1, 2, 3, and 5, con't.

STATE	(1)	(2)					(3)	(5)
		(a)	(b)	(c)	(d)	(e)		
NEW JERSEY	Y	Y	N	Y	N	Y	E	
NEW MEXICO	Y	N	N	N	N	N	B	
NEW YORK	Y	N	N	Y	N	N	C	
NORTH CAROLINA	Y	Y	Y	Y	N	Y	E	
NORTH DAKOTA	Y	Y	Y	Y	N	N	C*	
OHIO	Y	Y	Y	Y	N	N	C	
OKLAHOMA	Y	Y	Y	Y	N	N	C	
OREGON	N	Y	Y	Y	N	N*	E	
PENNSYLVANIA	Y	Y	Y	Y	N	Y	E	
RHODE ISLAND	Y	Y	Y	Y	N	N	D	
SOUTH CAROLINA	Y	N	N	N	N	N	A	
SOUTH DAKOTA	Y	Y	Y	Y	N	N	C*	
TENNESSEE	Y	Y	Y	Y	N	N	C	
TEXAS	Y	Y	Y	Y	N	N	E	
UTAH	Y	Y	N	Y	N	Y	F	
VERMONT	Y	Y	Y	N	N	N	C	
VIRGINIA	Y	Y**	N	N	N	N	A	
WASHINGTON	Y	Y	Y	Y	N	N	E	
WEST VIRGINIA	Y	N	N	N	N	N	A	
WISCONSIN	Y	Y	Y	Y	N	N	E	
WYOMING	Y	Y	Y	Y	N	N	E	

* Response modified
** Beginning July 1983

1. Does the State Education Agency certify or license educational personnel?
☐ Yes ☐ No → If no, please write the name and address of the agency that does on the lines below and mail this form back to me.

_____

_____

_____

If Yes, please answer the questions given below:

2. Do you charge fees for any of the following?

a. initial applications ☐ Yes ☐ No

b. renewals ☐ Yes ☐ No

c. issuance of additional certificates ☐ Yes ☐ No

d. consultation (either via phone or visit) ☐ Yes ☐ No

e. review of credentials ☐ Yes ☐ No

3. Which of the following BEST describes the situation in your state over the last four or five years.

In this column mark the one best statement

☐ The certification unit (or agency) does not and has not charged applicants for services.

☐ While no charges are now being made, in the past some or all services were charged for.

☐ We continue to charge for some or all services.

☐ We began charging for some or all services during the last four years and continue to do so.

☐ Over the past four or five years our rates have increased the cost to our clients.

☐ Over the past four or five years our rates have been lowered even though we continue to charge for some or all of our services.

4. What would you consider the most significant two or three issues that have affected the types of services that are offered and the presence (or absence) of a direct cost to applicants?

5. Please give me your name, mailing address, and telephone number so that I may get back in touch with you, if necessary.

_____

_____

_____

6. Please send me a copy of your list of current charges for services. Mail it and this completed questionnaire to

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